

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MAUREEN QUINN
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BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SEPTEMBER 22, 2005**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak today about our effort to help the nation of Afghanistan become a secure, thriving and stable democracy. I want to thank this committee for having drafted the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002 and its amendments in 2004, and for all of its hard work on Afghanistan.

The United States is working today to ensure that Afghanistan is never again a haven for terrorists, a major source of narcotics, or a source of instability or oppression towards its citizens. Paving roads, building security forces, and educating children, worthy though those objectives may be, are not ends in themselves. With congressional support, the Administration is working with Afghan leaders and our partners in the international community toward strategic goals of:

- Establishing an Afghan government that is:
 - Moderate and democratic;
 - Representative of responsible political elements in the country and formed through the participation of the Afghan people;
 - Capable of effectively controlling and governing its territory and borders;
 - Capable of implementing policies to stimulate economic and social development; and
 - Willing to contribute to a continuing partnership with the Coalition in the global war against terrorism.
- Developing Afghan society that is:
 - Supported by vigorous and enlightened civil institutions;
 - Respectful of the rights of all citizens, including minorities and women; and,
 - Characterized by a thriving, legal private-sector economy.

BUILDING DEMOCRACY

Afghanistan has come a long way since 2001. The Afghan people held an emergency loya jirga and established a transitional government in 2002. They formed a Constitutional Assembly in December 2003 and signed a new constitution with strong human rights provisions in January 2004. They held the first-ever democratic presidential election in October 2004, and the first parliamentary elections since 1969, last Sunday September 18.

Afghanistan's success in the implementation of the political process outlined in the Bonn Agreement, consolidation of its achievements, and the establishment of a constitutional, representative and effective government that embodies the aspirations of all Afghans are noteworthy achievements.

The orderly and successful National Assembly and provincial elections of last Sunday are one more major milestone on the path of democratization in Afghanistan. Afghanistan overcame enormous logistical challenges and procedural challenges with 5,800 candidates running for 249 seats in the Lower House and 420 seats in 34 Provincial Councils. Despite facing intimidation, societal restraints and limited access to voters in some provinces, 12% of the Lower House candidates and 8% of Provincial candidates were women. This election produced 69 different ballots, resulting in 142 tons of ballots distributed by planes, helicopters, trucks, horses and donkeys. The Afghans, with the support of the UN and international community, established 26,700 polling stations, recruited and trained 160,000 Afghans to work the polling and counting centers. This summer, just under 1.5 million new voters registered, bringing the total registered voters to 12.6 million voters. Forty-four percent of the new registrants were women; therefore 40% of the total voters list are women.

International and local observers overwhelmingly described the elections as calm, orderly and secure. In fact, some elections officials have stated that these elections may have been achieved one of the best results on record for a post-conflict election – in terms of a substantial voter turnout, low number of security incidents, effective Afghan and international cooperation in elections security preparation, and strong Afghan participation in the electoral process and Afghan vigilance against fraud. While there were some allegations of procedural irregularities and electoral fraud, there appears to have been nothing systematic that would have influenced the overall conduct of the election. The Electoral Complaints Commission has received complaints and is in the process of investigating them. The counting is now taking place in 32 counting centers and is expected to take 2-3 weeks. As the votes are counted, the focus turns to the seating of the National Assembly.

Preparations and support for the new National Assembly are ongoing. The old Parliament building is being renovated as an interim solution until construction of the new Parliament is completed. The U.N. has designed a parliamentary support framework called SEAL (Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature), which is divided into two phases. The first phase is designed to support the establishment of the administrative support structure of parliament. The second phase is designed to provide training and support to the elected members so that they are aware of their new roles and responsibilities, as well as continued professional training for the administrative staff. France, India, South Korea and other countries are providing support to the first phase while U.S. programs will support some activities in the first phase and the majority of the activities in the second phase.

With Congressional support, the United States is also implementing projects to accelerate development of grassroots democratic processes and civil society networks capable of advancing national goals and democratic values, such as respect for individual rights and religious tolerance. We have supported the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, which was established in the December 2001 Bonn Agreement and codified in Afghanistan's new constitution. Specifically, we are supporting an emerging independent media, with 35 independent radio stations established and broadcasting programs to 52% of the Afghan population. 40,000 radios have been distributed to hard-to-reach populations including rural women. Our programs provided training to almost 2,000 media professionals. Many projects

have focused on women, such as the development of Women's Resource Centers in 17 provincial capitals. 4,500 women have graduated from a community literacy program to enter into the healthcare profession.

Our commitment to a democratic Afghanistan is firm. The success of the Afghan people in laying the groundwork for a stable, constitutional and democratic government will have lasting implications for Afghanistan, for the region and for the United States.

SECURITY

Though Afghanistan's democratic institutions are growing, some security challenges remain. The Taliban and other insurgents tried – but did not succeed – in disrupting the elections process. As was expected, security incidents in the south slightly increased prior to the elections. U.S. and NATO forces, plus 20,000 Afghan National Army soldiers and 32,000 police, defended the integrity of the election process and the citizens who took part in it.

Our security presence in Afghanistan is and remains substantial. Operation Enduring Freedom continues the fight against the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other insurgent elements. Thirty-four countries are contributing troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), under NATO. NATO has expanded to northern and western Afghanistan and is now in the process of moving to the south. NATO currently leads nine PRTs headed by Germany, the United Kingdom, Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and Lithuania. The U.S. has one PRT under NATO. Outside NATO, New Zealand currently runs a PRT in Bamiyan, Canada commands a PRT in Khandahar, and South Korea shares responsibility with the U.S. for the Parwan PRT. The United States now commands 11 PRTs, mainly in the South and the East.

With our international partners, the U.S. is developing Afghan security forces. The United States has trained 50,000 police. As the lead nation for police programs, Germany has complemented our efforts by focusing on training police officials. We have taken the lead in training the Afghan National Army, now at a strength of approximately 25,600 troops which have been deployed in 16 provinces. The Afghan police and army have demonstrated their capabilities and professionalism in the field, they were especially effective in providing security for both the Presidential elections in 2004 and last Sunday's elections.

The process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) (a program headed by Japan and the UN) is progressing remarkably, with all heavy weapons now cantoned. The demilitarization and demobilization phase ended last June. Reintegration assistance is ongoing, with 66,000 former combatants thus far participating in programs. Afghanistan with international community support is now embarking on the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program. During the candidate vetting process there was an extensive effort to vet candidates for any ties to armed groups. This program was successful, and the Disbandment of Armed Groups program is now being implemented countrywide.

The United States continues to work to diminish the role of regional warlords. Showing political courage and determination, President Karzai has succeeded in reducing the influence of several of the most prominent former warlords. Some have joined the national government or

opted to run for political office themselves, becoming part of the political process. Some have also put their militias under the command of officers in the Afghan National Army. Though some have expressed concerns about the inclusion of some warlords or regional commanders in Afghan politics, we hope that the factional leaders will begin to understand that their future lies within the framework of democracy and the constitution – not outside of it.

Our strategic interests dictate that we take urgent steps to build the Government of Afghanistan's capacity to establish the rule of law and to create a stable framework for good governance. Working with the Afghan government to build a system that rewards transparency and is hostile to corruption, must encompass political development, disarmament and reintegration programs, as well as the narcotics industry. Robust drug production can contribute to an environment of corruption and of political and economic instability, and thereby undermine the democratically elected Afghan government. Unchecked trafficking and production of narcotics threatens to undermine other achievements the U.S. and our allies are making in the region and so the continued support of counter-narcotics efforts must remain an important part of overall U.S. policy in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has been a major opium producing country for most of the last decade and remains the number one illicit opium producer in the world. As such, eliminating the entrenched drug trade and drug-funded corruption will require a long-term and sustained effort, to which President Karzai has pledged his support. The Government of Afghanistan is engaged in a broad effort to combat poppy cultivation, including a U.S. backed strategy and implementation plan. The United States is working closely and cooperatively with the United Kingdom, the United Nations and other countries to assist Afghan efforts in eliminating the poppy trade.

Our rule of law program works to decrease obstacles to citizens' access to the formal court system, increase the professionalism of judicial sector personnel, and strengthen the capacity of critical judicial institutions. To date, 24 judicial facilities have been constructed, with 5 more to be completed by the end of next month. We are sending advisors to train judges and lawyers.

REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY

Afghanistan's gains in establishing a democracy and stabilizing the security situation will be held in place with the foundations of economic reform and stimulus. Our economic programs aim to strengthen economic governance, building capacity and establishing an environment that enables the private sector to expand and produce jobs and income. Since the fall of 2003 to the present, 19,473 micro-credit loans have been distributed to farmers and rural businessmen, 364 km of farm to market roads have been rehabilitated, and 742,631 farmers have received training. There are three industrial parks under construction – in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kandahar. The private sector has already shown interest in these parks; all of the lots in the Kabul industrial parks have been subscribed. A program is underway to privatize state-owned enterprises. Total domestic revenue increased by 20% the past Afghan fiscal year.

With U.S. leadership the international community is rebuilding war-torn Afghanistan piece-by-piece. The United States is constructing highways and provincial roads, already having

finished all 389 km of the Kabul-Kandahar highway and is 70% complete with the repaving of 326 km of the Kandahar-Herat highway. There are 704 km of provincial roads under construction.

We have built 278 schools and 326 clinics nationwide and handed them over to the Government of Afghanistan. Nearly 170,000 students are currently enrolled in school under the Accelerated Learning program and over 75,000 teachers have received initial or supplemental training under the same program and we have distributed over 35.6 million textbooks. We hear from teachers often. One teacher in Jalalabad has said:

"Communities didn't dare send children to school during the communists' rule, fearing they would be converted to communism. During the Taliban regime, the ban on girls' education and female employment further worsened the situation of girls and made them more vulnerable. Now lots of parents are waiting in line to get their children educated."

Our economic and social programs are providing Afghans with the opportunities to improve their lives – by educating their children, inspiring entrepreneurship and innovation or laying the foundations for future industry.

LOOKING AHEAD

The accomplishments in Afghanistan can be directly attributed to strong U.S. leadership and support to the courageous and determined Afghan people. Total U.S. assistance for Afghan reconstruction has increased steadily since 2001, and through FY 2005 tops \$9.0 billion cumulatively. This assistance has helped Afghanistan reinforce its newfound stability while engendering much goodwill among the population who see the U.S. commitment to their country as more than just rhetoric. On May 23, 2005, President Bush and President Karzai signed a joint declaration of the United States-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership. The strategic partnership's primary goal is to strengthen U.S.-Afghan ties to help ensure Afghanistan's long-term security, democracy, and prosperity. Afghanistan requested that the United States join it in a strategic partnership to help meet the challenges Afghanistan faces to its security and to building a new government based on democratic principles, respect for human rights and a market economy. The Strategic Partnership demonstrates the U.S. commitment to an Afghanistan that is democratic, free and able to provide for its own security.

The international community, too, has played an important role in rebuilding Afghanistan and donors continue to show commitment and staying power in Afghanistan. At the last International Conference on Afghanistan, held in April 2004 in Berlin, donor pledges equaled \$8.2 billion (including over \$4 billion from the U.S.) for reconstruction and enough to cover one hundred percent of the Government of Afghanistan's recurrent budgetary expenditures gap through the current Afghan fiscal year 1384, which ends in March 2006. Funding for the recently held National Assembly elections provides strong evidence of continuing international collaboration. A total of twenty-three donors pledged almost \$159 million to cover UNDP's election-related costs with the U.S. contributing \$40 million.

The United States and our international partners have re-affirmed our commitment to NATO-ISAF with the just passed UNSCR 1623 (2005) to renew the ISAF mandate. We have begun discussions on a framework for the next stage of reconstruction in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan is developing its national development strategy and is considering another international conference sometime in early 2006. It is critical that the international community maintain its engagement and keep its commitments. For its part, the United States is committed to Afghanistan for the long-term and we will continue to help the Government of Afghanistan with the international community to work for accelerated progress on reconstruction.

Our many achievements aside, Afghanistan has more work ahead. This includes taking the next steps necessary to create a sustainable secure environment, strengthen democratic institutions, educate its people, respect and enforce the rule of law and human rights, and develop relations with its neighbors.

We thank Congress for its past support on Afghanistan. With your future support, the United States will follow through on building security forces, strengthening democratic institutions and reconstructing Afghanistan so that it is never again a haven for terrorists or source of instability or oppression of its citizens. I would be glad to take your questions.